



CITES UPDATE #64
August 1998



Dear CITES Cooperator:

We would like to inform you of the following:

NEW CITES SECRETARIAT NOTIFICATIONS: The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service's Office of Management Authority (OMA) recently received CITES Secretariat Notifications to the Parties Nos. 1998/23-1998/32. Listed below are summaries of the Notifications that we feel might be of interest to our CITES cooperators. We would appreciate it if any CITES cooperators who request copies from OMA would please limit their requests to specific Notifications:

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| 1998/24 | <p><u>Nomenclature Committee</u></p> <p>Summary: At the 10th meeting of the Conference of the Parties to CITES (COP10), the Parties appointed a new Chairman and Vice-Chairman of the Nomenclature Committee. This Notification informs the Parties that the Chairman and Vice-Chairman will be contacting persons suitably qualified in taxonomic matters to establish the new membership of the Nomenclature Committee. The Fish and Wildlife Service's Office of Scientific Authority (OSA) will participate in the Nomenclature Committee.</p> |
| 1998/25 | <p><u>Implementation of Resolution Conf. 8.9: Recommendations of the Standing Committee</u></p> <p>Summary: This Notification informs the Parties that, at its 40th meeting in London, in March 1998, the CITES Standing Committee considered favorably the request of Tanzania to export ranched/captive-bred specimens of Kenyan sand boas (<i>Eryx colubrinus</i>), leopard tortoises (<i>Geochelone pardalis</i>), and pancake tortoises (<i>Malacochersus tornieri</i>) under annual export quotas agreed to by the CITES Secretariat and Tanzania. OSA is working with the Secretariat on this issue. The Standing Committee also considered favorably the request of Tanzania to export, in 1998 only, an existing captive stock of 250 specimens of Meyer's</p> |

parrots (*Poicephalus meyeri*) and 40 specimens of red-bellied parrots (*Poicephalus rufiventris*). This Notification also provides a list of certain species from certain states and recommends that Parties suspend imports of specimens of those species from those particular states.

- 1998/26 Control of Operations Artificially Propagating Specimens of Appendix I Species
Summary: This Notification lists two nurseries in the Czech Republic and one nursery in Germany to be included in the Register of Operations Artificially Propagating Specimens of Appendix I Species for Commercial Purposes. It also notifies the Parties of several species added to the list of species already included in the Register for Colomborquideas Ltda., a nursery in Colombia already registered.
- 1998/27 Designation of Management Authorities and Scientific Authorities
Summary: This Notification informs the Parties that the Secretariat has identified three CITES Parties that still have not provided information on their designated Management and Scientific Authorities, and an additional 10 Parties that have not informed the Secretariat of their Scientific Authorities. The Notification reminds Parties that permits or certificates issued by a Party that has failed to designate a Management and Scientific Authority are issued contrary to the provisions of CITES and must be considered invalid.
- 1998/28 Hybrids: Interpretation of “recent lineage”
Summary: The need for a harmonized understanding of the term “recent lineage,” included in Resolution Conf. 10.17 on animal hybrids, was discussed by the CITES Animals Committee at its 14th meeting (Caracas, May 1998). The Committee decided that the term “recent lineage” of a hybrid animal should be understood to mean the previous four generations of its lineage. This Notification recommends that Parties interpret the term as such.
- 1998/29 Appendices I and II
Summary: This Notification provides a correction to the taxonomy included in the Secretariat’s list of species on CITES Appendix I and II with regard to *Brachypelma* spp. It also provides corrections to two other minor errors in the list. Please contact OSA if you have any questions on this issue.
- 1998/30 National Reporting Form on Illegal Killing of Elephants
Summary: This Notification includes a copy of a National Reporting Form on Illegal Killing of Elephants and invites African elephant (*Loxodonta africana*) range states to complete the form and return it to the Secretariat by December 31, 1998.

1998/31

The Siberian Tiger - A Painting by Bateman

Summary: This Notification includes a photocopy of a poster of a tiger reproduced from the original painting of Robert Bateman. Mr. Bateman painted the picture to help raise funds for CITES projects. The Conservation Treaty Support Fund (CTSF) purchased the painting from Mr. Bateman and he and his wife in turn donated the proceeds (\$20,000) to CTSF for CITES projects. Mill Pond Press, Mr. Bateman's publisher, arranged with Bruce McGraw Graphics to produce a poster based on the painting. Ten percent of the proceeds of the sale of these posters will be allocated to external funding of CITES projects, through CTSF. These beautiful posters may be purchased from the Snow Goose Gallery, 9593 Gerwig Lane, Columbia, Maryland 21046 (tel: 301-596-2615). The Snow Goose Gallery will donate to CTSF for CITES 50 percent of the profits from the posters it sells.

1998/32

Transmission of Documents

Summary: This Notification includes, among various materials, a copy of the 1998 edition of the CITES Publications List (copy enclosed) and a revised CITES List of Parties.

NOTICE OF INTENT TO REVIEW ASPECTS OF WILDLIFE IMPORTATION AND EXPORTATION REGULATIONS:

On July 15, 1998, the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (Service) published a notice of intent in the *Federal Register* (63 FR 38143) announcing that it intends to review aspects of the wildlife importation and exportation regulations pertaining to domesticated species and certain captive-bred and captive-born species. In addition, the Service intends to review the current user fee structure.

The Service intends for this review to lead to proposed changes in the wildlife importation and exportation regulations that would ease the burden on importers and exporters dealing in wildlife that involves no conservation risk, and allow the Service to focus its resources on areas of greater concern. The review will also assess whether proposed changes in the current method of assessing user fees are warranted. Any proposed changes in the regulation of domesticated species and certain captive-bred and captive-born species will be addressed in a separate rule from any possible proposed changes in the user fee structure.

Comments on this notice of intent should be submitted to the Service's Office of Law Enforcement, (mailed to P.O. Box 3247) (hand-delivered to 4401 N. Fairfax Drive, Room 500), Arlington, Virginia 22203-3247. Comments may be submitted via E-mail to r9le_www@fws.gov. The Service will consider all comments it receives by September 14, 1998.

A copy of this notice of intent is enclosed for your information.

BRAZIL REPORTS THAT THE ENDANGERED LEAR'S MACAW IS THREATENED BY ILLEGAL BIRD COLLECTORS:

On July 14, 1998, the Brazilian Institute for Environmental and Natural Renewable Resources (IBAMA) issued the following press release reporting about the threats caused to the Lear's macaw (*Anodorhynchus leari*) in Brazil by illegal bird collectors. This species is listed on CITES Appendix I and is also listed as Endangered under the U.S. Endangered Species Act. The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service shares the concerns of the Government of Brazil about this species:

PRESS RELEASE

BRAZIL REPORTS THAT THE ENDANGERED LEAR'S MACAW IS THREATENED BY ILLEGAL BIRD COLLECTORS

Brasília - The Lear's macaw (*Anodorhynchus leari*) is one of the world's most endangered species. Occurring only in the semi-arid northeastern region of Bahia in Brazil, its area of occupation was only located in 1978 by a team led by Dr. Helmut Sick (who was one of Brazil's best known ornithologists). Due to habitat alteration, hunting and capture for the illegal trade, the species is facing a very critical situation - the populations of Lear's macaw have been reduced to less than 130 individuals in the wild. The illegal capture of these birds for trade has been recognized as one of the most important factors in the species' decline.

The rarity and precarious status of the Lear's macaw in the wild has accorded it the highest level of protection provided under the Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora - CITES. Brazil has been a Party of the CITES Treaty since 1975.

In addition to being a Party of CITES, Brazil has strict domestic legislation prohibiting the export of wildlife species. The Brazilian Wildlife Protection Act of 1967 prohibits the commerce of wildlife and products or objects that implicate their capture, pursuit or destruction. According to this law, it is considered illegal to keep Lear's macaws in captivity. It is important to note that since the legislation came into effect, Brazil has never issued any permits for the export of this species.

In 1992, the Brazilian Government created a Working Group today called Committee for the Preservation of Lear's Macaw. This Committee is responsible for the development and implementation of the conservation management plan for this species, which includes habitat protection, anti-poaching efforts, field conservation, research and educational programs.

Legal protection and the involvement of a number of institutions have contributed to the conservation of the Lear's macaw in Brazil. Contributing organizations have included the Brazilian Institute for Environment and Natural Renewable Resources (IBAMA), National Fund for the Environment - FNMA, Sao Paulo Zoological Foundation, Biodiversitas Foundation, Busch Gardens (USA), Houston Zoological Gardens (USA). Other groups that have supported conservation efforts include the World Parrot Trust (UK), the Wildlife

Conservation Society - WCS (USA) , CETREL S.A. and PETROBRAS - the Brazilian Oil Company.

The Brazilian wildlife authorities of IBAMA, in collaboration with state and local municipal agencies have been conducting a major campaign against the poaching in the region. Successes include the arrest in 1995 of a smuggler called Paraíba, who was caught with a Lear's macaw in his possession. In early 1998, the field team was able to observe a poaching attempt and apprehend the infractors in the act of placing the nets for the capture of the birds. In May of 1998, eight more birds were confiscated from an aviculturist called Zezao in northern Brazil. Despite increased security and ongoing efforts to control poaching, the Lear's macaw populations are still threatened. Many birds are still taken from the wild by trappers - going to a few illicit collectors of rare species.

Unfortunately, Lear's macaws are also being smuggled internationally from Brazil. In 1996, two birds that did not have any legal documentation or permits were confiscated from Mr. Lawrence Kuah Kok Choon at an airport in France. The French governmental authorities collaborated fully with the Brazilian conservation effort by repatriating the birds to Brazil. Sadly, one of the birds died at the French airport before it could be returned to Brazil.

In an international effort to conserve this species, the authorities in Singapore confiscated two Lear's macaws from a private collection, of Mr. Lawrence Kuah Kok Choon, the same infractor of the episode in France. This issue and the eventual disposition of the birds is now being addressed by the Singaporean legal system. Also this year, the British government confiscated three birds from a collector in Yorkshire. The Brazilian Government has requested the repatriation of all of these birds.

There is an expectation that both the Singaporean and the British governments will support the conservation of this species by acting quickly to repatriate the confiscated birds to Brazil, following the example of the French government and according to the CITES regulations. It is hoped that, these governments will access the heaviest penalties possible under their laws and jurisdiction against the infractors.

The position of the Brazilian Government and the Lear's Macaw Committee is that all undocumented and illegal birds should be confiscated by the authorities of the country in which they are found, and be returned to Brazil as part of the conservation program. As there have been no official permission for legal export of Lear's macaws from Brazil. All repatriated birds, as well as those confiscated in Brazil, will be evaluated for possible return to the wild or for participation in a coordinated captive management program.

There is a strong national commitment to the preservation of the Lear's macaw in Brazil, as has been demonstrated by a recent grant of \$ 200,000 to the project by the National Fund for the Environment - FNMA. In conjunction with project collaborators, this major grant has facilitated the protection of the area against poaching, supported field research, habitat restoration, conservation and educational programs.

The conservation of endangered species and the preservation of the world's biodiversity is a responsibility that all governments must take seriously. The illegal trade in rare and endangered species is a problem that has crossed national boundaries and can only be addressed through cooperation and support of all parties.

ORANGE COUNTY MAN INDICTED FOR SMUGGLING GECKOS: In a news release issued on June 17, 1998, by the office of the U.S. Attorney, Central District of California, it was reported that, on June 17, a Mission Viejo man, Adrian Sheldon Cunningham, was indicted on smuggling charges after allegedly bringing 57 New Caledonia giant geckos (*Rhacodactylus leachianus*) into the United States. Cunningham, 43, was charged with one count of smuggling the geckos and one count of making false statement in a Customs Service Declaration when he entered the United States on May 17.

According to the indictment, Cunningham failed to declare to Customs inspectors 57 live geckos he had concealed in his baggage when he arrived at Los Angeles International Airport on Air New Zealand after a flight from Auckland, New Zealand. These geckos, the largest known species of geckos, cannot be exported from New Caledonia without a permit and cannot be imported into the United States from New Caledonia without a permit from New Caledonia.

U.S. Customs officials discovered the geckos when they examined Cunningham's baggage. The geckos were concealed inside a portable kayak. Cunningham was arrested at Los Angeles International Airport by agents of the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service. Fish and Wildlife Service experts estimate that the value of the 57 geckos in the United States is approximately \$85,000. Cunningham was expected to be arraigned on the indictment on June 22, 1998. If he is convicted of both counts, he faces a maximum sentence of 10 years in Federal prison.

This case is the product of an investigation conducted by the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service and the New Zealand Wildlife Enforcement Group in Auckland, New Zealand.

RECORD NUMBER OF KEMP'S RIDLEY SEA TURTLE NESTS THIS YEAR: A TRIBUTE TO PARTNERSHIPS AND INTERNATIONAL COOPERATION: On June 30, 1998, the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service issued the following press release announcing that a record number of Kemp's ridley sea turtle (*Lepidochelys kempii*) nests have been recorded so far this year on Mexico's Gulf Coast:

PRESS RELEASE

RECORD NUMBER OF KEMP'S RIDLEY SEA TURTLE NESTS THIS YEAR A TRIBUTE TO PARTNERSHIPS AND INTERNATIONAL COOPERATION

More than 3,600 nests have been recorded so far this year for the world's most endangered sea turtle, the Kemp's ridley, on Mexico's Gulf Coast south of Brownsville, Texas. The total -

- more than 1,200 higher than last year's 2,384 nests (an increase of 50 percent) -- is the highest recorded since the late 1960s.

This modern-day record is providing biologists with hope that the Kemp's ridley sea turtle is continuing to recover from the brink of extinction. It is also a testament to the species' tenacity and longevity, plus the work of government agencies, support from nearby residents, and participation from a variety of other partners in Mexico and the United States.

"Thanks to longstanding partnerships between U.S. and Mexican wildlife agencies and more recent involvement of conservation and industry groups, we're beginning to see real progress in restoring these ancient marine creatures to their rightful place in the Gulf of Mexico," said Nancy Kaufman, Regional Director of the Fish and Wildlife Service's Southwest Region. The Service has led turtle recovery efforts for the United States since 1978, funding research, monitoring and hatchling release programs.

"We applaud the efforts of all partners working to restore the Kemp's ridley," said Dr. Rene Marquez, national sea turtle coordinator for the Instituto Nacional de la Pesca in Mexico. "Protection afforded the species by our government, combined with increased research, monitoring and educational efforts, is starting to show significant results."

As of June 29, more than 2250 nests have been laid at Rancho Nuevo, the species' main nesting beach, about 230 miles south of Brownsville, Texas. Other nesting areas, on a stretch of beach ranging 80 miles north of Tampico, Mexico, with Rancho Nuevo at its center, recorded the following numbers of nests so far this year: Playa Dos 450, La Pesca 41, Tepehuajes 609, Altamira 175, Miramar 11 and Lechugillas 70. A total of 13 nests have also been found this year on Padre Island, Texas, including nine on Padre Island National Seashore, a record for the United States as well.

"The Mexican government has provided crucial support for the recovery process," said Rollie Schmitt, Assistant Administrator for the National Marine Fisheries Service. "It has encouraged us to participate in recovery efforts with the Instituto Nacional de la Pesca, the State of Tamaulipas and a variety of other partners. This shared commitment has resulted in new hope for this tenacious survivor."

This year, the National Fisheries Institute, representing the shrimping and commercial fishing industry in Mexico and the United States, constructed a new monitoring camp for the turtle at Tepehuajes, a nesting beach about 50 miles north of Rancho Nuevo. The National Marine Fisheries Service has committed funding since 1996 to support enhanced monitoring of nesting activities in Mexico, improvements to a research compound at Rancho Nuevo, and expanded educational programs.

In 1947, biologists documented an estimated 40,000 Kemp's ridleys arriving in one *arribada* [a term used to denote a mass nesting 'arrival'] during the species' nesting season. By the mid-1980s, nesting numbers declined to about 700 per year.

Nesting began early this year, raising a crucial question for sea turtle biologists: was the early start a sign that the Kemp's ridley was continuing its recovery, or was it an El Nino phenomenon related to warmer ocean temperatures in the Gulf of Mexico?

"We've finally been able to answer this question, and it's good news for the turtle," said Pat Burchfield, sea turtle program coordinator for the Gladys Porter Zoo in Brownsville. "Even though nesting began in March, it's still under way and could continue until late July, when we hope to reach a total of more than 4,000 nests."

The Kemp's ridley was listed as endangered throughout its range on December 2, 1970. The decline of the species was primarily due to collection of eggs and killing of adults for meat and other products. The turtle was also subject to high levels of mortality from shrimp trawlers, which inadvertently catch turtles in their nets.

The turtle is the smallest of eight species of sea turtles, with adults generally weighing less than 100 pounds (45 kg). Females lay 80 to 140 eggs in nests dug in the sand each year. Kemp's ridleys are found in coastal areas of the Gulf of Mexico, but are sometimes seen off the eastern seaboard of the United States.

The National Marine Fisheries Service and the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service are cautiously optimistic about the upward trend in nesting females. However, the number of juvenile Kemp's ridleys found stranded each year on coastal beaches remains at a high level, indicating a source of mortality that could ultimately impact overall numbers of nesting turtles. Thus, recovery efforts for the Kemp's ridley sea turtle include continued protection of known nesting beaches and adjacent waters, plus further reductions in mortality from incidental catch of turtles in commercial shrimping operations in the United States and Mexico. Biologists have a goal of ensuring a nesting population of 10,000 turtles per year before considering upgrading the status of the species to "threatened" under the Endangered Species Act.

Sincerely,

Teiko Saito, Chief
Office of Management Authority

Dr. Susan S. Lieberman, Chief
Office of Scientific Authority

Enclosures

All documents referred to above are available on request from either the Office of Management Authority (OMA) or the Office of Scientific Authority (OSA). Address correspondence to OMA to: U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, Office of Management Authority, 4401 North Fairfax Drive, Room 700, Arlington, Virginia 22203 (tel: 703-358-2095; fax: 703-358-2298; E-mail: r9oma_cites@mail.fws.gov). Address correspondence to OSA to: U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, Office of Management Authority, 4401 North Fairfax Drive, Room 750, Arlington, Virginia 22203 (tel: 703-358-1708; fax: 703-358-2276; E-mail: r9osa@mail.fws.gov).